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Debate Updated

Not all U.S. citizens will view the "Nixon-Kennedy debate of 1962" in the same manner.

Those who believe the U.S. was taking the wisest course in promoting an invasion of Castro's Cuba and that the mistake was simply in failing to make the invasion successful will be interested in determining who is telling the truth today and who told it in 1960.

Those who believe that the mistake on the part of our government was not in the failure of the invasion but in our government's participation in the affair will not be especially interested in the current charges, counter-charges and denials, for in the minds of those persons the policy of the government was wrong.

The current debate does at least one thing: It shows the difficulties candidates can get into, or the difficulties they can get their nation into, when they compete for public favor. During the 1960 campaign Mr. Kennedy began demanding a militant stand against Cuba. Mr. Nixon now contends, in his new book, that this put him, Nixon, in a box, because the administration, by means of the CIA, was masterminding an invasion of Cuba and of course he couldn't admit that it was going on.

So, Mr. Nixon says, he had to go to the other extreme, which he did in one of his debates. He attacked the Kennedy proposal as "irresponsible because it would violate our treaty commitments." He said the Kennedy idea was "dangerously irresponsible" and if followed, it would "lose all our friends in Latin America" and be an "open invitation" to Premier Khrushchev "to come into Latin America . . ."

Mr. Nixon now says that Mr. Kennedy's demand for strong action against Cuba put him, Nixon, in an "ironic position." But many citizens, we believe, will say the real irony is in the fact that Mr. Nixon in his debate was telling the voters that it would be dangerously irresponsible to be militant against Cuba when Mr. Nixon himself was privately supporting a militant policy.

One wonders if perhaps both Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Nixon aren't still overlooking the fact that the U.S. did in fact lose friends in Latin America as result of the invasion attempt and that while Mr. Khrushchev has not personally gone into Latin America, the Soviet bloc communist influence has increased in Cuba since the invasion attempt.